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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS AIR BASES, EASTERN AREA
CHERRY POINT, NORTH CAROLINA 28533-5000

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Docket Management System
U. S. Department of Transportation
Room Plaza 401
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590-001

FAA-03-16359-2

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE MAKING (NPRM) PROCESS FOR THE
HILTON HEAD, SOUTH CAROLINA, AIRPORT

To Whom It May Concern,

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has awarded the Hilton Head, South Carolina Airport Authority a Federal Contract Tower (FCT) under the provisions of the Federal Contract Tower Program. The FCT and associated Class Delta Airspace, at the Hilton Head Airport, are scheduled to be commissioned in March 2004.

Commissioning Class Delta Airspace is a rule-making process in accordance with FAA Handbook 7400.2E (Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters). Federal regulations require the proposal to be placed on the Federal Register (FAA Notice of Proposed Rulemaking number FAA-2003-16359; Airspace Docket 03-ASO-18) for public and/or agency comment. My comments are contained in enclosure (1) and are submitted in accordance with the NPRM process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. M. Flanagan".

R. M. FLANAGAN
Major General, U. S. Marine Corps
Commanding

Enclosure: 1. Commander, Marine Corps Air Bases, East, Comment
On FAA Notice Of Proposed Rule Making Number FAA-
2003-16359; Airspace Docket 03-ASO-18

Copy to: Commander, Marine Corps Bases, Atlantic

**COMMANDER, MARINE CORPS AIR BASES, EAST COMMENT ON FAA NOTICE OF
PROPOSED RULEMAKING NUMBER FAA-2003-16359; AIRSPACE DOCKET 03-
ASO-18**

Action

Docket Number FAA-2003-16359 Airspace Docket No. 03-ASO-18.

Commissioning of Class Delta Airspace at the Hilton Head Airport, Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Discussion

Commander, Marine Corps Air Bases, East, Cherry Point, NC, is in receipt of Federal Aviation Administration Docket FAA-2003-16359; Airspace Docket 03-ASO-18, which proposes the establishment of Class Delta Airspace at the Hilton Head, South Carolina Airport.

The Marine Corps is concerned that further expansion of the Hilton Head Airport would adversely impact Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort's ability to safely manage air traffic within delegated airspace and accomplish aviation training that is vital to national security.

The airspace in and around MCAS Beaufort is becoming increasingly congested and difficult for air traffic controllers to manage safely. This is particularly evident in the area south of MCAS Beaufort where military aircraft arriving and departing MCAS Beaufort and civil aircraft arriving and departing the Hilton Head Airport compete to utilize the same airspace.

Current airspace congestion increases dramatically during periods of instrument meteorological conditions, and is particularly acute when runway 05 is utilized at MCAS Beaufort. Instrument approach capability for runway 03 at the Hilton Head Airport lacks a precision approach so that aviators most frequently request the Localizer/DME approach for runway 21 and circle to land on runway 03. This procedure causes the established air traffic flow into MCAS Beaufort and the Hilton Head Airport to be disrupted. As a result of this procedure, IFR aircraft arriving at Hilton Head Airport and departing and arriving aircraft at MCAS Beaufort operate in opposing traffic patterns in the same airspace. Additionally, military aircraft arriving at MCAS Beaufort must be vectored off established noise abatement routing and/or receive excessive vectoring en-route to the airport.

Enclosure (1)

The Marine Corps recognizes that the proposed Class Delta Airspace at the Hilton Head Airport could assist air traffic controllers in managing air traffic during visual meteorological conditions at current traffic levels. However, we are very concerned that increased operations resulting from any future airport expansion at the Hilton Head Airport would create an unmanageable and unsafe environment for joint military and civilian aircraft operations. Accordingly, this formal comment is provided to note that, while we do not oppose the Class Delta Airspace designation proposal at Hilton Head Airport, we will object to any future proposal to designate Class Charlie Airspace or otherwise significantly increase the amount of operations at the Hilton Head Airport.